Double sided version

GOODBYE VICTORIA

An Edwardian childhood

in Ipswich

by

Criss Barrington Gyford

PREFACE

My father recorded his childhood memories on two tapes during 1982. Before recording them he prepared himself a series of notes and scripts from which to talk. This document represents a transcript of the first tape supplemented by the scripts for the second tape. The latter, although recorded and heard thereafter by myself, has since disappeared but my recollection of its contents matches those of the script, which has survived.

John Gyford

These are the memories of Criss Barrington Gyford, born at 7.30 on the evening of December 7th 1901 at 90 Fore Street, Ipswich, Suffolk. My father had the same name as myself, Criss Barrington, and he married Bessie Florence Potter on the 13th of February 1899 at St. Matthew's Church in Ipswich. He was then a soldier in the Suffolk Regiment and before the end of the year was in South Africa for the Boer War. He was wounded in one of the skirmishes out there and returned to this country in 1900 and was discharged from the Army as unfit for further service and in 1901 I was born. That was the year in which Queen Victoria died and if I were to write my autobiography I think I should call it Goodbye Victoria because I seem to have been brought up in quite a Victorian atmosphere. My parents, my uncles and aunts and grandparents were all real Victorians and the few years of King Edward's reign didn't seem to alter that: nothing altered I think until the end of the 1914-18 war.

My father was the son of Charles Gyford, who as a young man was a blacksmith in the village of Bedfield in Suffolk, but who later came to Ipswich to work in Ransome's foundries. He married Maria Stevens and they produced a family of twenty-three children of which my father was the youngest. The twenty-second child had died before my father was born and it used to be a family joke that my grandmother had twenty-two children twice. Many of the children died in childhood and my father used to say that some of his brothers he never even met or knew - they moved out of Ipswich and he never got to meet them. The only names I can recall are Albert, Edgar, David, Arthur, Samuel and two sisters, Laura and another sister who lived in Harwich but whose name I cannot recall. Five of his brothers actually served together in the Boer War. My father was very proud of his Army service and he

did very well for the few years that he was in the Army, playing cricket and football for the Suffolk Regiment. He was stationed at Bury St. Edmunds and on some occasions turned out for Bury St. Edmunds football team.

My mother was the daughter of Thomas and Mary Potter. Tom Potter was for some time a blacksmith also at Ransome's foundries but later became a market gardener on the Felixstowe Road. Her mother had kept a corner shop on what later became known as Potter Street in the St. Clement's area of Ipswich but most of my mother's time was spent on the market garden in Felixstowe Road until she married my father. She was one of a family of eleven, so really I had quite a number of uncles, aunts and cousins but most of the Gyford people seem to have moved out of Ipswich although practically all the Potter people remained in the area so I had plenty of relations to whom I could have turned but somehow it didn't turn out that way. The names of the Potter family are contained in the family Bible which is now in John's possession. Strangely enough my mother, after her marriage, didn't seem to be particularly friendly with her own family. She was on quite good terms with her sisters Ruth, Anna and Eda but for the rest of the family she seemed to have no time. I never really understood what it was all about but the result was that I didn't enjoy the company of cousins as much as you would expect me to have done.

Number 90 was built in the early 1500s, about the same time as the Neptune Inn. It was timber framed, almost certainly oak, with exterior and interior walls of lathes and plaster with pargetting designs of trefoil and open rose. Actually the Sorrel House inn on the opposite side of Fore Street dates from 1490 and so the house might have been built before 1500.

Whilst Dad was serving in South Africa, Mother had converted the front room of number 90 into a greengrocer's shop, based on her market gardening experiences I expect, and as soon as Dad was physically fit they began to build up the business. Two or three years later they bought the next door house, number 92 and doubled the shop area and made the backrooms of 92 into a large store room. A new doorway upstairs gave us a very large room always known as the 'best room'. The ceiling was a very well carved plaster one and very ornate. There was a large three oil-lamp chandelier in the centre, which you pulled down for lighting and was then pushed up and kept in place by counter weights: there were also two bracket oil-lamps, one each side of fire-place. A large bow window overlooking Fore Street was a favourite vantage point for me. From this window I saw the laying down of the original tramlines and the putting up of overhead electric wires and the first electric trams to replace the horse-drawn ones. Also I could watch the lamp lighter with his long hooked pole and lighted taper as he lit the gas lamps - I could see twenty-one lamps from that window.

One lamp-post became known to the family as Bessie's lamp-post because my sister when suddenly turning back to come home from school struck her face on the metal post and burst her eyebrow open and had to have it stitched up at the doctor's to which she was taken by taxi summoned by phone. Number 90 had the phone connected in its early days - the telephone number was 612 and there was a white metal sign outside the shop with a blue bell design on it and the words 'you may telephone from here', the only such sign in the area. All the same, Mother was not at all keen on using the phone - "too much electricity is not good", she said.

The tramcars came along Fore Street when I was about three years

old. The double lines outside number 90 meant that any cart delivering goods had to move over to allow the trams to pass and this used to cause a lot of trouble with the drivers especially if the tramcar driver kept clanging his bell. Where a single line existed then the conductor used his stick to change the lights from green to red to indicate that his car was coming onto the single line. The trams were open-topped with leather aprons for the seats for the passengers in wet weather. They were double-ended trams so there was no need to turn around. There were horse-drawn cabs on the Cornhill in what we call now taxi lines, taxis - motor-car taxis - appearing in about 1909. There was a cabmens' shelter on the Cornhill for the drivers' rest and refreshment. This site was later occupied by the Boer War memorial, which was later put in Christchurch Park and re-dedicated by the Prince of Wales after the 1914-18 War.

A regular thing at the private houses that still existed in Fore Street was the cleaning of doorsteps every morning with a scaling stone and a whitener. There was also the sharpening of carving knives on the doorstep for carving the meat joints. Sunday meals were taken to bakers' ovens for a few pence. In those days I would be sent for a half-shoulder of lamb, knuckle-end, which would cost two shillings and threepence. There would be children in the shop buying four penny worth of scraps for the poor homes in Waterworks Street and places like that. Sugar was threepence a pound, you could buy double weight margarine for sixpence a pound; double weight meant that if you asked for a pound for your sixpence you would get two pounds. My mother always gave us suet pudding or batter pudding for the first dinner course unless the main course was meat pudding or steak and kidney or rabbit pie. Rabbits cost eightpence or ninepence each skinned, the skins fetching threepence or fourpence.

One of the earliest things I recall is wearing a white furry coat and a matching beret hat and having my father's South African Boer War Queen's Medal pinned on my coat and being carried on my dad's shoulder on his way home from the Cornhill where he had been presented with the medal by Lord Kitchener who had come down to Ipswich for that special purpose to present medals to the Suffolk Regiment. But I particularly remember looking down the steps to a fruit shop in Westgate Street: evidently the road had been built up, but the shop itself was well below street level probably because the ceiling of the shop was not raisable. To me it always seemed peculiar that a shop should be down steps instead of up.

The back doors of number 90 Fore Street opened onto a driftway which led down to the docks and as a little boy I spent a lot of time playing down there on the barges. The chief cargo was grain for the maltings and lucca beans which were processed into cattle food. Opposite number 90 there were two maltings, one kept by Mr. Meakins, another by Mr. Chinnery. These maltsters lived in a company house and had to attend to the large semi-underground maltings in their back-yards. Meakin's house had been once occupied by Captain Eldred, the round-the-world voyager, and his alleged captain's cap is now in the Christchurch Mansion museum. Chinnery's yard also had stables for the horses that pulled the grain carts that took the malted substance to breweries. It was chiefly Cobbold's brewery of course and in those days boys with pails and shovels followed the horses to collect the manure, most of the children being barefoot. It was a regular thing in those days to see the women going to Sneezums the pawnbroker on Saturday mornings to get out their husband's and children's Sunday clothes and then they would return them on Monday again because they

needed the money. On Tuesday mornings, if I was at home, I would make a point of going to the window of the upstairs room because Tuesday was the market day when the cattle from Nacton Road, Felixstowe Road, Bucklesham Road would be driven down Bishop's Hill, along Fore Street round into Salthouse Street on their way to the market. Of course there were practically no cattle vans in those days - a lot of them came by road. The cattle from Foxhall Road came down the Back Hamlet and occasionally two herds would join together, which would mean great excitement along Fore Street. Of course they were followed by a good many boys with their shovels and pails, etc.

Another memorable occasion were the horse-drawn timber carts. These carts had two separate bogies; the front bogie was under the forward part of the actual trunk that was on the timber cart and the other bogie was nearer the other end of the tree trunk so that the actual tree trunk made the body of the cart. These were drawn usually by four Shire horses, two in the shafts attached to the front bogy and the other two in traces ahead of it, and they found it very difficult to round the bend from Salthouse Street to Fore Street - it was about a forty-five degree turn and there had to be a lot of backwardsing and forwardsing before they could actually get round. Of course that would hold up all the traffic, including all the trams, and would make quite a jam. The horses then towed the trunk along and went down Duke Street towards Brown's the timber merchants down by the docks. These trace horses were stationed in the forecourt of the Carpenters Arms at the foot of Bishop's Hill. These horses were used to help to pull heavy loads up the hill. Bishop's Hill was much narrower than it is now, with big hedges each side. At the top of the hill, at the junction of Nacton Road and Felixstowe Road, was a

large water trough, for the cattle of course, and with metal cups for human drinking, and a lower trough for things like sheep and dogs.

Although cycles were then very popular and the motor-car was just beginning to be more used, the chief means of locomotive power was still the horse. My father had two horses - the names I remember are Charlie and Black Bess. These were used to pull two trolley vans that took vegetables round to two parts of the town: one part was between Fore Hamlet and Back Hamlet such as Foxhall Road, Rose Hill Road and places like that, where there were very few shops and where people were only too pleased to buy their vegetables from the van. The other van used to do the area of Henley Road and Westerfield Road, a better residential area but again an area with very few shops. Dad didn't know much about horses so of course he had a horseman, a fellow called Tom, whom I particularly remember because he was the first person I knew who had a gramophone and he brought this gramophone along to one of our Christmas parties where the children were absolutely amazed and surprised at hearing such a thing. In fact I think Dad often wondered where Tom got his money from to afford such a thing as a gramophone which was expensive in those days. Anyway Tom used to look after the horses quite well and of course he took around one of the vans and the other van was taken around by a fellow called Bob. I learned to (cycle) ride by going along Fore Street with my Dad and round by the Earl Grey and then coming back again: the cross traffic wasn't so much of a problem in those days and I soon learned well. Bessie of course was carried on Dad's cycle if we went any distance, such as to Felixstowe or places like that. Later Bessie and myself cycled to Boyton - eighteen miles that was - when we were staying with our Aunt Ruth. On one occasion on a Sunday, Dad drove over to visit us

whilst we were there. He drove over with Charlie pulling the trap but unfortunately he let the horse fall at the Eagle gates. The horse was stabled afterwards at Boyton but because it had running joint oil from its knees owing to the fall it had to be shot: I've always remembered that. The place at Boyton where Aunt Ruth lived was the old Mill House with the Mill stump still standing.

Next door to number 90 was a very small shop between 90 and the Neptune Inn. It was just a shop, with one room at the back and two bedrooms upstairs. It was occupied by Haggars, that was the name of the people; they were pork butchers, an elderly couple who had a niece who had a daughter by her cousin who had emigrated to Australia on the promise of sending for her but he never did so. The cousin was the son of this elderly couple and so she lived there: it was quite a serious matter in those days of course, this illegitimacy. In the doorway of this shop there were two large hooks, one on each doorpost, from which the carcass of a pig was suspended and cut in halves vertically with a large chopper. This happened twice a week so I suppose they made their living out of these two pigs. Their sausages I always particularly noticed because they had rather large pieces of meat in them and mother used to complain a lot about that. Then one day she learned that they were going to get a new mincer: she was quite excited about it. Lo and behold! - when the new mincer arrived it had exactly the same sized cutters so they still got the large pieces of meat in the sausages. I do remember the scraps of solidified pork fat which they used to sell and which we often had for a five o'clock meal. We used to call them scraps but I believe some people call them scratchings.

Next door to this shop of course was the Neptune Inn, not as some

books says the oldest inn in Ipswich - the Sorrel Horse was at least twenty or thirty years older. Within 200 yards of number 90 I should think there were at least thirty pubs whose names I will try to recall. On the corner of Salthouse Street there were three pubs and opposite to the corner one was the Beehive Inn. On the corner of Church Lane was a pub later converted into a fish-shop: on the corner of Fore Street and Waterworks Street was another pub (later) converted into a shop for second-hand furniture. On the opposite side of Fore Street was the Wheatsheaf, whilst at the Eagle Street - Tacket Street junction there was a pub on each corner, four pubs at one crossways. In the other direction there was the Vine public house in Church Street, now part of Grimwade Street, and there were three more at the corners of the Grimwade and Church Street intersection. At the junction with Back Hamlet and Fore Hamlet was quite a large pub, the Earl Grey and there was a pub called the Star on the opposite corner near the Grimwade Memorial Chapel at the corner of Long Street. On the opposite corner of Long Street was another pub later converted to a shop. On the other side of the Earl Grey there was one each side of Duke Street which also had a passage leading to the dock-side where there were two more dockside pubs. There were several more pubs along Duke Street opposite Ransomes works and opposite the Gas Works and up Little Wykes Bishop Street. In those days pubs and butchers' shops both had sawdust sprinkled on the floors. Wykes Bishops Street by the way was the street in which my father was born and where he lived until he was fourteen and from where he went to school, at Cavendish Street school, and I can recall my mother, who was very fussy about her dresses had a dress-maker who lived somewhere around Wykes Bishop Street. I particularly remember the room which she used - it was used as a sort of fitting room, because she used to take me with her so that I would know where

to take Bessie for her dresses. The room had dozens of Goss China ornaments on the many shelves around the room: I always remember those.

My sister Bess was born when I was three and a half but I don't remember anything about the event or about the earlier years of our life together but I do recall that I had to take her to this dressmakers to have her dresses made. My mother was very, very keen on having everything tailor-made if possible; even my suits and shoes had to be tailor made. This really was a drawback, because both these things were soon too small. The shoes being ready made (tailor made) by the time I got them - and it sometimes took the shoemaker a couple of months to make them - they were already getting too small for me and this was very bad for my toes. The same with the suits: by the time I got the suits and had worn them for a few months then the sleeves were too short and the trousers were getting too short for me because I was growing quite quickly. The same thing applied to things like tight kid gloves which we had to wear and which in my case gave me chilblains. Shoes came from a man called Fitch, whose business was actually run under the name of Daldry which was his father-in-law's name. We used to go to parties when the Fitch children had them and I always recall that from their back bedroom window upstairs you could overlook the Jewish cemetery. I wonder if it's still there: if it is its where a new by-pass road is going to be constructed. That's where my shoes were made. My suits came from a Mr. Pierrepoint in Tacket Street opposite the Salvation Army citadel. The Salvation Army citadel was a former theatre where David Garrick made his early appearances. Later my suits came from J. and J. Edwards in Carr Street, then later on much more posh suits from Ridleys.

Further from number 90 beyond the Neptune Inn was Beard's, grocers

and wine merchant. Half their place was a shop and the other part was a rather nice residence. Next to them Barnard's the corn chandler's and Isaac Lord's house and their coal warehouse which led down to the dockside. Then came another fruit shop kept by Richard Potter, who actually was mother's cousin and who set up shop there in opposition to the Gyfords with the idea of closing them down but of course that just didn't happen. Then there was Fenner's cycle shop and Bloomfields the bakeries - which was always a very nice-smelling place of course because the baking was done on the premises. Another pub on the corner and on the opposite side of Fore Street from the pub was Taylor's sweet shop and Taylor the hairdresser. Further down towards number 90 on the opposite side was the Beehive Inn, then Sneezum's the pawnbrokers and a furniture shop which later became a communal butcher in the 1914-18 war, and Jackson's the chemists. Jackson made his own pills and he actually showed me how to make these pills, which of course was very interesting, with a little wooden press thing. He made things like Jackson's Little Liver and Kidney Pills: he also had Jackson's Famous Cough Mixture. His daughter Mary Jackson became a very good concert pianist. Next to them was Meakins, a place I've already mentioned, then Mrs. Watson's boarding house for working men exactly opposite number 90: then Keels' - Mr. Keel was a solicitor's clerk, then came Chinnery's maltings. Next to that a doss-house for poor men, then Betts' who had home-made sweets and on the corner of what was then Church Street, now Grimwade Street, was Ribbon's hardware shop, which was below road level, you went down about two steps into the shop. On the other corner was a shop that was empty for some time but later was occupied by Barnard's who moved from further up Fore Street, that's next to the Sorrel Horse which I think was built in in 1694. Then came Edward's the bakers, then a tobacconists and then

the social settlement, to which I used to go on Sunday evenings with my grandad Potter except in the summer term.

Both sides of my family were staunch Liberals, the Labour Party having had little foothold in agricultural Ipswich in those days. My grandmother Gyford's sister Annie Stevens had married a Daniel Goddard who was a foreman at the Gas Works. He later became a worker representative on the newly formed Gas Board - to begin with the gas had been manufactured by Ransome's as a sideline to their engineering works and Ransome himself was a Liberal and a Quaker who worshipped at the Friends Meeting House in St. Peters Street. Getting back to this chap Goddard, he was chosen as Liberal candidate in the 1906 General Election and beat the sitting Conservative candidate. Ipswich had two parliamentary seats in those days and Goddard's successful partner was the Rev. Sylvester Horne who had three sons, the most prominent of them being the radio and T.V. personality, Kenneth Horne. The Chairman of the Ipswich Liberal Association was Major Rowley Ellison whose daughter married Isaac Foot, a strong Liberal and the Foots had three sons of whom the most notorious is Michael Foot whom I believe people think is a Socialist.

Getting back to that chap Goddard again. He won the next General Election in 1910, was knighted and became a Privy Councillor so rejoiced in the billing as the Rt. Hon. Sir Daniel Ford Goddard, but he was beaten in the General Election after the 1914-18 war, when Ipswich became a one-member seat; he was beaten by Captain Ganzoni. Ganzoni later purchased Belstead House on the outskirts of Ipswich near the Ostrich Inn on Wherstead Road, and Ganzoni became Lord Belstead and his son is now a worthy junior minister in Mrs. Thatcher's circus.

Before the 1914-18 war Goddard used to hold regular Sunday evening

services for men in the social settlement and I used to wait outside the social settlement at about 6.30 for my grandfather to come along. He would take me in with him although I was only ten years old at the time. There was the usual hymn-singing, mostly sailors' hymns like Eternal Father Strong to Save and that sort of thing, and there was usually a lantern-slide lecture given either by Goddard, who had travelled quite a bit, or by some guest speaker. But the enthusiasm was mainly in the Liberal cause there were practically no socialists in those days but it was quite interesting and I enjoyed going to these things which ceased of course when war broke out.

My mother was very fond of crocheting and knitting: she would make cushion covers using the cloths which were marked out in squares and using thick cotton in a circular pattern in each square: it made a very nice design and so we had many nice coloured cushions about the place. My dad had no particular hobby, he was concerned mainly with the extension of the shop and the fact that he was very much now in the wholesale business as well and he also acted as a ship's chandler - he supplied practically all the vegetables and meat to the various ships in the Ipswich docks. Many of these of course were sailing ships; I have seen as many as four full-sized sailing ships at one time on the far side of the docks. And of course steamships were becoming much more important then and several of those would be in the docks at the same time and he would have the supplies for those. He had also opened another shop in Brook Street and had a third one in St. Matthews Street, so he got very busy in that way and he had no particular hobbies of any sort. He never smoked cigarettes or a pipe but was very fond of cigars and he usually smoked those at the weekends: I would be sent to Dotheby's, the tobacconists in Orwell Place, now part of Tacket Street, to buy the cigars, which were called Torpedoes

and cost threepence each.

Most of the shopkeepers in those days wore waistcoats and white aprons; the butchers wore striped aprons and straw hats.

My first school was Clifford Road Infants School. I went up Back Hamlet, then turn left along an unmade road across Grove Lane which was not then built up. There was high ground on each side of Grove Lane in those days and there were deep gulleys down the sandy banks where the children clambered up or down. There were open fields from Grove Lane to Clifford Road itself which appeared to be on the edge of the town although there were houses then along Foxhall Road. The headmistress was a Miss Garrard who lived in Palmerston Road and who treated me as a rather favourite child - probably because she was a school friend of my mother and a staunch Liberal. Both my sister and myself were able to read well by the time we started school. I don't know why that was, as I cannot recall ever getting any reading lessons, but there were always books available in our house, mostly along religious lines. My favourite reading material was comics - Comic Cuts on Tuesdays with its Dreamy Daniel and Weary Willie, and Chips on Thursday with its tramp Tired Tim and its back page Casey Court which was a weekly wonder of Do it Yourself in those early days. Other periodicals I recall were Tit-bits and Answers, but it was not until I was nine years old that I graduated to the Boy's Own Paper, and the novels of R. G. Henty and Rudyard Kipling and Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes.

At Clifford Road school during the reading lessons each day I was given a duster and told to dust the shelves and silver cups in the hallway and so pass my time because I was such a good reader -

it was a waste of time to sit in at the reading class, I was much ahead of any of the class. At eight years of age I transferred to the Central School in Smart Street off Foundation Street where the headmaster was Mr. Harrison. There was a fee of 6d a week at this school although it was a Council school: girls were on the ground floor of the building and boys on the first floor. What I particularly recall was that on Empire Day we would all parade in the playground and the Australian flag would be raised whilst we sang 'Rule Britannia' and we were told that on that same day the Union Jack had been raised at our corresponding school in Ipswich, Queensland. At the end of my first year there, Mr. Harrison retired and was replaced by a Mr. Welburn who was the first graduate head of a primary school in Ipswich. He had a B.Sc. and was also well-known locally as a musician.

My sister Bess began her schooling at the age of five at Miss Banks' private school in Foundation Street which meant that I could take her to school as it was only just round the corner from the Central School. I believe Miss Banks' fees were 6d a day. It was from the Central School that I took the eleven plus exam for a scholarship and passed, much to the annoyance of the parents of my school chum, Percy Gilbert, who lived in Church Street and who did not pass his 11+. According to my mother the chief objection to me being given a scholarship was that I was only ten and a half years old but that the Gilbert boy <u>was</u> eleven, and so I ought not to qualify for another year. Anyway, we both went on to the Secondary School that September, although I think the Gilbert boy had to pay half-fee. Actually, in September the Secondary School did not resume its school year until ten days after the Central School resumed and my parent insisted that I returned to the Central School for those ten days, much to my annoyance at the

time, but it was all for the best because I was placed in the 5th Form where a Mr. Murgatroyd introduced me to Algebra, and from that time onwards Mathematics seemed to become reasonably easy for me. I was the only one in the first form in my new school who had ever done any algebra.

I realise that I seem to have skimmed over my early days without giving much detail of what I did with my time. Up to the age of about six I had to wear a smock-like overall to protect my clothes when playing in the back yard - many children wore overalls in those days. Apart from the back yard to play in, there were also the store-sheds, the stables and a very large loft over the shed and stables. There was also a large concrete paved corridor leading to the outside lavatory which had no cistern but where there always seemed to be a small stream flowing into the docks which flushed the W.C. Looking back I would think that the stream flowed under the house because our kitchen was built up on piles as an addition to the original building. I kept a number of pets at various times - rabbits, guinea pigs and some pigeons and chocolate coloured doves in the loft. I also had a goat and a goat-cart similar to the ones that could be hired on the front at Felixstowe. One day I borrowed a broody hen from Grandad Potter and successfully hatched out a dozen chicks but the rats got the lot. Creatures I <u>didn't</u> keep were rats and mice, the hollow plaster walls were alive with them: you could hear them running along the walls. We always had two or three cats which kept the rats and mice away from the shop and the store rooms.

During holiday time, Bess and I would spend a lot of time in Christchurch Park playing cowboys and Indians, which was the outcome of our Saturday visits to Poole's Picture Palace in Tower Street.

Each Saturday we were given tuppence, two old pennies, and that was usually spent as a halfpenny for two ounces of pear drops, a halfpenny for a comic and one penny for the cinema. As you entered the cinema you threw your penny into an open box - no nonsense about tickets then - the box was under the watchful eye of a small man always called "Monkey" and he could spot a foreign coin at once. We used not to arrive too early at the cinema, because the early comers were ushered into the main body of the hall and had to sit on hard wooden seats whereas latecomers were allowed upstairs to occupy the plush seats. Of course, the films were silent but accompanied by a pianist and the roar that went up when the show began was something out of this world. There were usually three films - a serial where the villain was always putting the heroine in danger. The villain was always greeted with hisses and at the end of the film when the girl had been rescued and was being kissed by the hero there were boos and sarcastic remarks. The second film was usually a newsreel which was watched in comparative silence and I think with some interest, but the third film was what we had all been waiting for - either cowboys and Indians or slapstick comedy such as Charlie Chaplin. We really did enjoy those shows although I always left the cinema with a terrible headache - I expect it was the flickering of the pictures, together with the complete absence of any ventilation.

This Poole's Picture Palace was run by a family called Poole and began originally as a magic lantern show in Tower Street. Later on two other cinemas opened in Ipswich - the Cinema in Princes Street and the Picture House in Tavern Street near the Cornhill. One day at school in 1915 I was told by some chums: "Gyford, saw you on the newsreel last night". An Army sergeant who had lived in Ipswich had

been awarded the Victoria Cross and the local authority were giving him a civic reception and this was recorded by Gaumont British News. The first part of the reception was a drive from the railway station to the Town Hall in an open carriage along streets lined by cheering well-wishers. Of course, crowds of youngsters were following the carriage and there was I on my bicycle just behind the cab as it approached the Cornhill - brief moments of reflected glory.

I also recall early in 1917 the first 'talking picture'. It was Shakespeare's King Henry the Fifth and the prologue and the King's speech before Harfleur were recited on the stage alongside the picture by an actor who made a very good job of it. We were taking Henry the Fifth for our School Certificate that year so practically all the form went to see the film. I can still recite many parts of that play including those two speeches.

I did reasonably well at school. My English was good so I found that Composition - which was really writing essays - became almost natural when combined with a little imagination. My spelling was good so I was always first in dictation - that was probably due to my early reading skills. Mathematics presented very few problems and I enjoyed both Physics and Chemistry, but Art was not in my line - I think my drawings and paintings must have been too futuristic. No doubt there was some early evidence of my later journalistic skills as in the 4th Form I founded and edited the form magazine - I still have three copies of that monthly publication including my wonderful 'Adventures of Wharlie Whaplin'. Obviously I was aware of copyright and dare not use the name Charlie Chaplin. The magazines contain a list of those form-mates who had brought eggs to school for me to give to the wounded soldiers at the Suffolk Hospital. Those school-days were occasionally inter-

rupted by air raid warnings which were given by the sounding of the foundry sirens - what we called the 'bulls'. On hearing these we were sent home until another siren sounded the all-clear.

Although warnings were given on many occasions there were only a very few actual air raids. The warnings were caused by Zeppelins returning from raids elsewhere, chiefly on London, and of course on their way back to Germany, but one actual raid I do recall clearly. It was at about 7.30 on a Friday evening. My father was out looking at some property - he acted as a valuer for Oxborrows the estate agent. Mother was as usual doing her knitting and Bessie was at the table reading. I was doing my Geometry homework - Theorem 23, the square on the hypoteneuse equals the sum of the squares on the other two sides - suddenly a loud thump that rattled the windows. Mother said "under the table". Before we got there there was another thump and then a third one, and we could hear the br-br-br of a Zeppelin's engines dying away in the distance. A few minutes later my father rushed in, saying he had seen the Zeppelin. The first bomb hit a house in Salthouse Street opposite the Customs House, killing two people and setting the house on fire. The second bomb fell into the dock and the third one into the river between the lock gates and Stoke Bridge - not bad aiming for those days so its probable that they wanted to smash the lock gates.

The very first raid I recall was in the summer of 1915 when we were on holiday at Aunt Ruth's in Hollesley. Uncle William was away on Army service. We were asleep when we were awakened by loud gunfire from the anti-aircraft guns in Shingle Street about a mile across the marshes. Bessie and I rushed into Auntie's room in alarm but had great difficulty in arousing her - she was almost stone deaf and had heard nothing. No bombs were dropped but the Zeppelin was hit and came down in the North Sea.

Going back to my schooldays something I enjoyed very much was the once-a-month nature ramble taken by the Nature Study master Mr. Bachelor. He usually took us in the direction of Westerfield or Henley, and how interesting I found it all - butterflies, insects, birds, flowers. One field I still remember vividly - flowering with cowslips and buttercups and a stream that was alive with tadpoles and banks lined with elms. Over fifty years later I motored out along the Henley Road to see if I could find that same field. I found it - not built on as I had feared but just as I had always pictured it, but without the tadpoles. Happy days.

Most of the popular songs of those days we heard from the whistling and singing of the errand boys, or from the many barrel organs and the hurdy-gurdies, both of which usually had a monkey to attract money. There was also the occasional performing dancing bear with a ring through its nose - the ring fastened to the end of a pole so that the bear had to rise on its hind legs and swivel round as the pole was moved about. Gramophones were also becoming more in use and my parents had a HMV gramophone - the first one with cylindrical records that began with the words "This is an Edison Bell record", and then later a gramophone that had the flat records. These gramophones were both of course hand wound.

In my young days many of the side roads would have straw spread over them if there was any illness in the road. That was to deaden the sound of horses hooves and the cart wheels - but of course this didn't happen on main roads because of the tram-lines. Funerals seemed to be everyday events then - the horses with black plumes on their heads and black drapeson the outer side. Most of poorer people belonged to a funeral club into which they paid a few pence each week so that

they could afford a proper funeral. For a child, it was usual for the small coffin to be placed under the seat where the driver sat and behind this was the cab-compartment for up to six people. In the country areas it was usual for the coffins to be either taken to a churchyard on a farm wagon or on a four-wheeled light platform carriage, similar to the conveyance used by the police to get the drunks to the police station on a Saturday night. I recall that one wall of my parent's shop was hung with artifical wreaths under glass domes - small sizes were £1 each and large one £5. I think later the cemetery authorities banned these glass domes as they were considered to be dangerous.

My father did considerable business supplying fruit and vegetables to ships and I think he had some sort of financial arrangement with the dockside public house to put the ships' business his way. Anyway we seemed to be friendly with a great number of publican's children and we always went to their Christmas parties and they came to ours. I can recall seeing as many as three fully-rigged sailing ships as well as smaller barquantines and brigantines in the docks at one time together with several steam vessels and many barges moored side-by-side four deep. My father as a young man made a trip in a ketch to Blythe in Northumberland with a return cargo of coal - but he only made the <u>one</u> trip. He said that was enough for him. Actually he began work at the age of 14 by going up to London to work with his eldest sister Laura who had a very flourishing flower business in the High Street, Stoke Newington. He came back to Ipswich two years later when she got married to a Mr. Stockles and his help was no longer needed. He said he often had to get up at four o'clock in the morning, in order to get to Covent Garden Market to buy the boxes of flowers. After leaving London he had a short spell in the Post Office at Ipswich in

the sorting department before he joined the Army. He was stationed in the Ipswich Barracks in St. Matthews and it was whilst there that he met my mother who after their engagement came to live with her married sister, Anna in nearby Clarkson Street, and they were married at St. Matthew's Church. I was baptised in St. Clement's church but I cannot recall either of my parents being church-goers, and I never attended St. Clement's church. When I was about ten years of age I had to go with my sister Bess on Sunday morning to the Congregational Church at the foot of Back Hamlet - the Grimwade Memorial Chapel was its official name. I suppose the reasons for being sent there were that my Aunt Kate attended that chapel and the Grimwade family were staunch Liberals. John Henry Grimwade was the nephew of the 'memorial' Grimwade and had inherited the family business of gentlemen's outfitters on the corner of Westgate Street and the Cornhill. The Grimwades lived in a large house on Fonnereau Road, and every Sunday morning the family of four would set out on its progress to church, walking down the centre of the road, across St. Margaret's Plain, down Upper Orwell Street and Fore Street - there were no trams running on Sundays. John Henry attired in morning frock-coat and striped trousers with a shining black top hat, was obviously in charge and would doff his hat to any passer-by who glanced at him. Bessie and I used to walk up Fore Street deliberately so that I could touch my cap to him and watch him pompously raise his topper - it quite amused us. We also attended the Sunday School opposite the chapel and when I was twelve I was given the job of School Librarian, but during the war years my devotions wandered elsewhere and I attended the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Museum Street, St. Bartholomews' Church off Felixstowe Road, the Salvation Army citadel in Tacket Street - my Aunt Hannah was a Salvationist and her son, my

cousin Willie Newson, played a cornet in the band; and I went to the Town Mission which was a break-away from the Salvation Army and held its meetings in Poole's Picture Palace in Tower Street. On one occasion I accompanied a Mr. Hilling, who was a business partner of my father, to a Quaker meeting in the Friends' Meeting House in Friars Street and met Mr. Ransome the boss of Ransome, Sims and Jeffries the foundry people, but I did not like the informality of the service. On the whole I think I preferred the High Church Anglo-Catholicism of St. Bartholomew's. I never attended a Roman Catholic church. I think there was only one in Ipswich and that was in Orwell Place, which is now part of Tacket Street.

Reverting to my years at the Secondary School, the school building was in the Tower Ramparts and faced what was left of the original wall around the port of Gyppeswyk which was the former name of Ipswich. The Ramparts were about three foot above street level and about half-a-dozen houses had been built on the foundations. To the right was the north gate to the port - that is Northgate Street and to the left was the west gate where Westgate Street joined St. Matthew's Street at a five-way junction known as Hyde Park Corner where Churchman's the tobacconists had a shop with a more than life size figure of a Scotsman in full ceremonial dress in the doorway. Parallel to the Ramparts was Soane Street where there was a row of shops one of which was the school's unofficial tuck-shop which we were allowed to patronise in the mid-morning break. The name over the doorway was M. A. Bell so of course it was known as Ma Bells. There was often an appetising smell of fried sausages from the kitchen as Ma Bell had given the sixth form prefects permission to do that. The majority of these lads and their followers in later years did not

survive the horrors of the Somme, Passchendale and Hill 60. The shops have now disappeared together with the Ramparts which are now part of the car park.

Somehow it is always the pleasant things that remain most vivid in one's memory and no doubt that is a good thing, as one doesn't want to relive unpleasant happenings and actually I cannot recall any unpleasant things. My week-ends were chiefly occupied by playing on the dock-side, on and off the barges and I can recall more names of the barges now - the Ida which was built in 1895, the May built in 1901, the Alice May which was new to me in 1905, the Spinaway and the Cambria. Some of these still sail in the annual Thames Sailing Barge race. Many of the skippers were school-mates of my father or mother but although they knew me and my sister Bess, I have forgotten their names. On at least three occasions I sailed down-river on a barge and was put ashore at Pin Mill with my cycle and made my way home from there. There were three main barge owners: R & W Paul who had their own shipbuilding and repair yard just outside the lockgates. Paul's barges had a white cross on the topsails, which I think represented a windmill because they were mainly concerned with wheat and barley milling. Cranfield's was another milling firm that owned barges that brought not only grain but lucca beans for cattle feed. A third barge-owning firm was Measons whose emblem was a white moon - they were general carriers and did not do any milling. All these barges were well-maintained and several of the larger ones traded to the continent - these were gaff ketches known as 'boomies'. The smaller ones were known as 'spritties' with a spritsail on the mizzen mast, although slightly larger barges had the spritsail on the main mast and a gaff on the mizzen. A barge with a crew of these was known as a 'matie',

but many had only two in the crew, with an extra boy during the school holidays to help with the cooking.

When not playing on the docks or in our backyard, Bessie and I would go to Christchurch Park particularly to play Cowboys and Indians in the conifer plantations, re-living the films we had seen. Occasionally we would go up to Bishop's Hill to the race course and make our way across to Grandad Potter's garden where we were assured of plenty of fruit and the gift of a penny each from Grandad.

Naturally, summer holidays were the best for enjoyment. My first August holiday away from home was spent at Boyton, a few miles from Hollesby, which I have mentioned before. This was to stay with Uncle William Sharpe and Aunt Ruth, my mother's sister. Uncle Will was secretary and accountant to the Hollesley Bay Labour Colony which was run by the London County Council and provided farm work for men from London who were on remand, or on probation or just, I suppose, were unemployed. The colony was concerned mainly with fruit-farming, with a considerable amount of arable land that was being won back from the surrounding heathland. There was dairy farming on the marshes, and they also did well breeding Suffolk horses, which they continued to breed even after mechanisation took over. Bessie and I cycled to Boyton via Woodbridge and Melton across miles of heathland dotted with small conifer woods and inhabited by hundreds - probably thousands - of rabbits. The first part of this heathland turned out to be the site of the Sutton Hoo Viking discoveries. Much of the heath is now occupied by Bentwaters, the airfield run jointly by the R.A.F. and the United States Air Force. The tiny village of Boyton was on slightly higher land than the surrounding marshes which probably explains the windmill there - our uncle's house was called The Old Mill House and

the mill stump still existed in the garden.

My main enjoyment of the holiday was wandering about the countryside, particularly along the marshes that led down to Hollesley Bay. There were quite a number of grass snakes to be seen - quite harmless as distinct from the poisonous adders on the heathland. A wonderful variety of birds especially on the shore of the bay - oyster catchers, spoonbills, and a variety of gulls which in those days seemed to keep well out to sea and show little interest in the farmlands as they do today. It was here that I was first introduced - by some village children - to the devil's puff ball which when dried out gave a black powder that would heal up cuts and scratches - I have wondered since if this was a form of penicillin. There was only one shop in the village - a Post Office combined with a general store where one could buy sweets and which Bessie and I patronised each day and probably accounted for our popularity with the village children. I recall the variety of sweets now - large pear drops, small pear drops, acid drops, orange suckers, lime suckers, mint humbugs, clove humbugs - all of which we enjoyed excepting the clove ones. Unfortunately the sweets were twice the price charged in Ipswich shops. We got only two ounces for a penny. I cannot recall any chocolate being on sale.

By the following year the Sharpes had moved to Ivy Cottage in Hollesley near to the Colony's headquarters. Ivy Cottage was a large four bedroomed house with two large reception rooms and a very large kitchen. There was no bathroom but a very large kitchen table was hinged to the wall under the window and when this table top was raised it would reveal a white porcelain bath. Water was heated in a large coal-fired copper in the corner of the kitchen and the water transferred to the bath by means of a long-handled ladle. The cold water supply

was from a pump over the sink and the pump needed to be primed by pouring in about a pint of water to make sure it would draw up from below. The closet was in an outside shed and consisted of a wooden seat over a large pail which was emptied each night by the night-soil man who would open a small trap-door at the back of the shed and empty the contents into a four wheeled tank drawn by a horse whose clumping hooves were sure to wake you up during the night. Cooking was done on a coal-fired oven and Aunt Ruth used to bake the most delicious rabbit pies I have tasted, supplemented by slices of fat pork. Fortunately, in view of her deafness, Aunt Ruth had very little household shopping to do - all foodstuffs were supplied by the colony, that was one of the perks of the job, so that at least twice a week fresh fruit and vegetables were delivered together with joints of meat, rabbits, hares, chickens and bread. But Auntie did bake her own cakes and, of course, the various meat pies.

The house stood in a large area of garden, mostly lawns and flower beds but it included a mixed woodland coppice which to me was a boy's delight as it attracted many kinds of birds and I could climb the trees to locate and look at the eggs in the nests - I never robbed a single nest, I don't think it occurred to me. On the opposite side of the roadway was a high bank of sand and this was riddled with holes made by sand martins which were flying in and out all day. When I tired of the garden I would wander across the marshes that stretched to what was left of Hollesley dock - it was said that quite a lot of smuggling went on here and gin was referred to as "a drop of Lloyd George" as he, when Chancellor of the Exchequer, had put a tax on spirits that made it more worthwhile to dabble in smuggling.

August of course, was the harvest month and I recall the excitement

of being in a field of corn that was being cut. Armed with a stick, we children waited for the rabbits that were in the uncut section and then we moved in striking at the rabbits as they attempted to escape. I remember my disappointment when the first rabbit I struck down was taken from me and added to the other dead rabbits to be distributed to the field workers when the cut was finished. I did get a rabbit to take home but it was not the one I had killed. There were no combine harvesters in use at that time and the reaper-binder, drawn by two horses, cut the corn-stalks to within a few inches of the ground, arranged and tied them into sheaves which were then thrown clear of the binder. Workers then gathered up the sheaves and stacked them together, eight or ten sheaves to make the stooks which usually remained in the field for a day or two to dry out. Then a large horse-drawn farm cart was used to carry the sheaves to wherever the stack was to be built - usually in the corner of the field, to await the arrival of the threshing machine, which was usually towed by a traction-engine. The threshing machine was operated by a leather belt over the drive wheel which passed over the flywheel of the traction-engine. Then men with pitchforks passed the sheaves from the stack to a man on top of the machine and the man would cut the binder string and push the sheaf into the moving machinery. From one end of the thresher the grains would spill out into sacks and from the other end the stalks would be carried away on a moving belt to form a straw stack. Straw was in constant demand in those days as bedding for horses and cattle and there was no reason for burning it as happens today. Occasionally, if a farmer needed to get on with his ploughing he would set fire to the stubble, but as there was no standing straw there was not the nuisance of smoke as you get today when it is necessary to clear the fields of what seems to be a useless product - straw.

The colony had its own shoeing-forge for the large number of horses and on a rainy day I would sit in the forge and watch the two shoe-smiths at their jobs and marvel at the docility of the huge Suffolk horses amidst all that hammering of steel, the smell of burning hoofs and the heat of the fire which was kept going by the blast from hand-operated bellows. There were occasional riding horses to be shod and the governor of the colony was a keen hunting man, as was his son Jack Barton who married one of the daughters of Sir Edmond Vestey, later Lord Vestey, the boss of the shipping line of refrigerated vessels and large cattle interests in Uruguay and Argentina.

In 1916, because Aunt Ruth then had three children of her own to look after, our August holiday was spent in Hintlesham at the home of a small-holder named Dyer who supplied Ipswich shops with fruit. He used to get his fruit mainly from the gardens of the surrounding villages - he had some sort of contract with them - and Bess and I used to help him gather the fruit. The small-holding was about 25 acres and included a large field of wheat, a large orchard and two grass paddocks for the horse and the milk-cow. Later during the war these paddocks were taken over as an emergency landing area for aircraft. Mr. Dyer was a keen Salvationist and played a flute in the Hadleigh Citadel Band and his son George played the trombone, so on Sundays we all cycled to Hadleigh for the services which included open-air meetings in the High Street and a march back to the Citadel behind the Salvation Army band. I still recall the framed tract on the dining room wall opposite to where I sat for my meals - God is the head of this house, the unseen guest at every meal, the silent listener to every conversation. One of my daily tasks was the collection of eggs that could be found in many different parts of the farmyard and I would get about thirty a day. On one occasion I went up into a loft from

which I had noticed a hen fly down - they really can fly - and I found a clutch of forty-two eggs. Money for the eggs always went to Mrs. Dyer, its a country custom that the farmer's wife gets the egg money. On our last holiday there in 1917 the threshing machine arrived, supplied by a contractor who served all the neighbouring farms in rotation. This was a new self-contained machine that did not need a traction engine for its motive power, and took only about two hours to do the whole of the small crop. That was my last holiday on a farm as I left school that year.

I cannot recall that either my sister or I had any particular hobby, but we had plenty of interests. I had a small Meccano set but was not very keen on it as I found the small nuts and bolts rather fiddling to handle. I preferred a construction kit called Kliptiko which consisted of thin, hollow metal rods that could be clipped together to form buildings, bridges, lifting cranes or ships. I also had a very good collection of lead toy soldiers, many of them in the correct regimental colours, and some in khaki which had come into general use in the South African war. There was also a gun and limber drawn by six horses. This gun had a pull-spring which fired wooden pellets with enough force to knock down toy soldiers. There was also an ambulance van drawn by two horses which my father said was similar to the one in which as a wounded man he spent several days on the journey southwards to Cape Town. In keeping with this military outfit I had a wooden fort complete with moat and drawbridge. In 1915 I paid sixpence for my first camera bought from the former penny bazaar, later re-named Domestic Bazaar, at the corner of Providence Street and Westgate Street. This camera was a black cardboard two inch cube with a photographic plate inside opposite to a pinhole in the front. Moving

aside the cover to the pinhole, exposed the plate for a few seconds and resulted in quite a good photographic negative. The drawback was that you had to break open the box to get at the negative so a new camera was needed for each picture. I read up all about the development and fixing of negatives and the printing of pictures from a library book and was so successful that I saved up five shillings to buy a real camera. This again was a box camera with the trade name of Clincher, and it held six photographic plates one behind the other and when the foremost was exposed a lever could be pulled and it was dropped to the bottom of the camera so it could be removed and developed without waiting for the other plates to be exposed - or of course, all six plates could be exposed one after the other if required. I had quite a lot of success with this camera and much regret that all this photographic apparatus and pictures, together with my toy soldiers, etc., disappeared when we moved from Fore Street to Hatfield Road after the war. My sister Bess had a large Teddy Bear who sported a very good tailor-made waistcoat made by a professional tailoress, a Miss Lillie who was a Salvation Army comrade of my mother's sister, Hannah. Bess also had a large sleeping doll whose eyes closed when it was laid down - that was a novelty then - together with a cradle and a large furnished dolls' house of four rooms, a hall and a staircase. My sister also wore at times a nurse's uniform with a red cross on the bib of the white apron, and she had a good cooking stove and oven on which she actually cooked fried chips - Dad ate some of them but Mother wouldn't touch them. Both my sister and I had regular piano lessons for four or five years and at one time we had a harmonium as well as the piano. The harmonium had bellows operated by foot pedals, and was played for hymns on Sundays. That also disappeared in the move along with my sister's toys - and mine.

In 1914 when I reached the age of twelve I was able to join the School Scout Troop. Our uniform was dark blue shirt, shorts and stockings with a khakhi neckerchief and the regulation broad-brimmed hat, a scout-knife and a whistle and of course, the five-foot wooden pole carried by all Scouts in those days. This pole was very useful to help in vaulting ditches and low hedges. In 1915 we camped in Woolverstone Park, along the Shotley Road, near to Freston Tower, along the bank of the River Orwell. Much of this area appears in Constable's paintings, especially the Boot Inn at Freston and the one of Landguard Fort near the mouth of the Orwell. I believe that this latter painting really put Constable onto artistic success when it was exhibited in London. However, back to the Scout camp. There were forty of us in five bell tents, a sixth tent for the scoutmaster, Mr. Mossman and his assistant and a small marquee as a dining tent. It was here that I first took a real interest in cooking - sausages and mash mostly, but that's what boys like; porridge and bacon and eggs for breakfast; toast, cheese and jam for supper and tea or fizzy lemonade. There was a very cheap fizzy drink in those days called Monsters - twice as large a bottle as any other kind and a penny back on the empty bottle. We had a small drum and bugle band and on the way home from camp I was sufficiently capable of playing one of the drums on the way home - a proud moment. Scouting instruction was quite practical and I learned a lot about erecting a tent, tying rope-knots, and elementary first-aid and identification of various birds especially the wading birds along the River Orwell. Unfortunately I was in the Wood-pigeon patrol whose call - book-a-ooo, book-a-ooo - might be all right in a town but in a country area where there were dozens of pigeons it was just hopeless. The Scout troop closed down when the Scoutmaster and his assistant were called up for Army service, and was replaced

by an Army Cadet Force for which I was too young.

One wonders what it is that creates the start of a new activity such as the spinning of tops season. Suddenly one morning it would be top-spinning time as all the rage. There were two main kinds of tops - the mushroom one and the inverted circular cone known as a Dutch top. Both types could be made to spin by winding the string of a whip around them and then jerking the whip and keeping the top spinning by furious whipping which also propelled the top several yards if you were lucky. Some people were expert enough to spin the top by a twist of the fingers as the top fell to the ground. Roads and pavements were the usual areas for top-spinning, as school playgrounds were considered danger areas. Of course, there were very few motor cars about then, but I should have thought that the horses, carts and tramcar were serious difficulties. Perhaps we kept mainly to the side roads. There was also a much larger type of metal Dutch top which could be propelled by a wound-up spring and which made a humming noise but this was really an expensive toy - about a shilling I should think. Then suddenly the season would change - the girls would take up skipping and the boys were all for leap-frog on the way to school and around the playground. One particular type of more stationery leapfrog was known as 'uppa-giddy, uppa-giddy, one, two, three'. This was played by opposing sides of up to six boys. One boy stood against a wall and his team mates bent down before him in a line jutting out from the wall. The opposing team, one at a time, leapt on to the line of boys as far up to the wall as possible and when all were in place they chanted "uppa-giddy, uppa-giddy, one, two, three" and if the line had not collapsed by the time they had finished, the team below had won.

Hop-skotch was mainly a girls' game, but marbles was essentially

for boys. It was possible to play a moving game of marbles on the way to school by bowling a marble along the gutter in an attempt to hit the previous marble of your opponent. If you made a hit, then you kept the other marble. There was also a more stationary game where you crouched around a shallow hole in the ground and with a flick of your thumb knocked someone else's marble into the hole which entitled you to another shot at a third marble and so on until your own marble went into the hole and someone else took over. A third game was a real business affair for which you needed a piece of wood about a foot long which had four or five half circles of wood cut out. Above the semi-circle was a number, 4, 3, 2, 1 and zero. You were charged one marble a go and you bowled a marble in an attempt to pass through one of the numbered tunnels. If you went through zero you lost your marble. If through no. 1 you were entitled to another go. If through no. 2 you had another go plus an extra marble. Through three, then two extra marbles. I think the ownership of such a marble block was akin to a bookmaker's licence - you couldn't lose.

Two other games with which my sister and I were supplied were Diabolo and Ping-Pong. Diabolo consists of two sticks joined by a four foot piece of string and you held one stick in each hand. The diabolo was a cylindrical piece of wood about three inches long and two inches in diameter with its centre portion cut away so that it looked like two circular cones joined at the apex. With the sticks held a few inches apart the diabolo was balanced on the hanging string - that took some doing to begin with - then the sticks were jerked apart, tightening the string and propelled the whirling diabolo up into the air and then came the difficult part of catching it on the outstretched string before it reached the ground. Not at all easy. I still have the two sticks and string and the diabolo. Another game

was the original ping-pong, now upgraded to a more professional status as table tennis. The net was stretched across the dining table and kept in place by a screw-type vice at either side. The bats were sixteen inches long, nine inches of handle and seven inches of blade which was five inches wide and three-quarters of an inch thick. I know these exact measurements because I still have the original bats impressed with the words ping-pong. The bats are at least seventy years old. Each face of the hollow blade is covered by parchment. I don't think my sister or I played with them very much but you can still hear the distinctive ping when you strike the ball and the pong when the ball strikes the table. They are still very much capable of further play, but probably not at the furious pace of today's table tennis.

Sunday afternoons were times for family excursions during the summer months. On several occasions we walked to the paddle-steamers berthed in the New Cut which was 'over Stoke'. 'Over Stoke' meant that you had to cross over the Gipping at Stoke bridge to reach the steamer which left at three o'clock after the pubs closed and sailed down river to Pin Mill to pick up further passengers and then on to Parkestone Quay at Harwich where most of the passengers alighted and visited the quayside shops for plates of oysters, winkles, whelks, shrimps or mussels. Meanwhile the paddle steamer went across river to Felixstowe pier and sometimes on to Walton-on-the-Naze. The return journey began at about five o'clock and there was usually music and dancing on the upper deck and the bar below was well patronised - the bar opened as soon as the steamer left the quayside. What interested me most of all was to stand on a platform in the engine-room and watch the pistons rising and falling with accompanying outbursts of steam,

and the steady churning of the two paddles and the ringing of the engine-room telegraph as the Captain signalled for one or other paddle to be slowed down, as that was the method of steering the vessel rather than the usual use of a rudder.

This going down river reminds me of the only time my father took me fishing. He hired a rowing boat from the ship yard at Cliff Quay and rowed out to mid-stream down river and threw out the fishing line and it was not long before we had a bite and whatever it was began to tow the boat this way and that so that I got quite worried as to what was happening. Meanwhile Dad was hauling in the fishing line as well as he could and eventually we saw our catch - a wriggling eel about three foot long, it looked bigger to me - which was hauled inboard and then began threshing about in the boat. Dad was trying to hit the eel with the boat's baling-tin but the more he struck at it the more it thrashed about, and the vessel was rocking about dangerously and the fishing line was in a terrible tangle. I think I was scared stiff and eventually father cut the line and threw the eel overboard and rowed back to the shipyard. That was our only fishing expedition.

Another Sunday excursion - usually a full day out for which we took a picnic lunch - was a wagonette from the Old Cattle market. A wagonette was a four wheeler horse-drawn vehicle where the passengers sat on two seats facing one another - about twenty people or so. We went over Stoke Bridge along the Wherstead Road and the Strand through Freston and Pin Mill and Chelmondiston to Shotley Pier where we disembarked for the day. There was a large naval barracks at Shotley in those days and in the river was the old training ship H.M.S. Ganges. When we came to a hill and there were four or five hills on the way, men and boys had to get out of the wagonette and help to push it up

hill. On the down-hill slopes a metal drag was placed under a rear wheel so the vehicle did not prove too much for the two horses. The drag scoured a trench in the surface of the roadway which was composed of flints - I don't recall any tarred asphalt or macadamed roads in those days. Whenever a car came by there was a great cloud of dust and the horses had to be calmed down. There was not much for children to do at Shotley except paddle in the river or play in the fields, but we enjoyed the picnic. On the way home in the evening the wagonette was always stopped at the Boot Inn, Freston, and we children had lemonade and biscuits whilst the adults went inside for refreshment. I think some of the most enjoyable part of the trip was the walk home from the Old Cattle Market in the gathering darkness with the lamp-lighter on his rounds - about the only time my sister and I were out after darkness fell.

Mention of the Old Cattle Market reminds me that there was a roller-skating rink there, where the Post Office sorting department is now. This skating rink was also used for professional boxing events and I recall that the Suffolk champion was Phil Suffling - not that I was allowed to see any boxing. There was a second roller skating rink down by the recreation ground near to Portman Road and I became reasonably good at skating. Occasionally on a Wednesday afternoon if Ipswich Town was playing a home football match at the Portman Road ground my father would take me there - as a young man he had played for Bury St. Edmunds when he was stationed there as a soldier. Of course in those days Ipswich Town was only in the Southern Amateur League, but even then it was supported by the Cobbold family and there is still a John Cobbold as chairman. My sister and I are still share-holders in the Ipswich Town Football Club.

POSTSCRIPT

In August 1917, a few months short of his sixteenth birthday, Criss Barrington Gyford entered the Merchant Navy. The following year he enlisted in the Royal Army Service Corps in which he served during the final months of World War One.

After the war he returned to the sea and during the 1920s sailed on a wide variety of ships including those of the P & O Line. In 1932 he married Ethel Florence Roper, a friend of his sister. He became a mature student at London University and after graduation began a second career as a teacher and lecturer in the London area. Meanwhile he was also pursuing a third career in broadcasting and writing, often drawing on his world-wide travels for radio talks, articles and books.

In 1940, as a Royal Naval Reserve officer, he was captain of one of the 'small boats', the M.V Lucy, during the Dunkirk evacuation. In later years he was an officer in both the Air Training Corps and the Home Guard. Politically he maintained his parents' Liberal loyalties, serving as Liberal Party agent, council candidate and constituency president in Twickenham in the 1940s and 1950s.

He retired from teaching in 1960 and enjoyed a long retirement, marred only by the death of his wife in 1980. He died on April 30th 1987, survived by his sister Bessie, his children John and Christine and his grandchildren Philip and Susie.

J.G.